DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 163 533 CS 502 310

AUTHOR Rahim, Syed A.
TITLE Communication and Rural Development in Bangladesh. Case Study No. 3.
INSTITUTION Hawaii Univ., Honolulu. East-West Center.
PUB DATE Jun 76
NOTE 65p.; Small print may be marginally legible

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$3.50 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Communication (Thought Transfer); Developing Nations; Foreign Countries; Program Descriptions; *Rural Development; *Social Change
IDENTIFIERS *Bangladesh

ABSTRACT

This monograph outlines the trends of rural development communication in Bangladesh and places the processes of communication in the Comilla Rural Development Project in a broad historical perspective. In this way, it relates rural development communication to the larger framework of cultural and political change within the country. Five sections contain discussions of the changing patterns of communication and culture, the Community Development and Basic Democracies Program in East Pakistan, the Comilla program, and communication within that program. (FL)

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COMMUNICATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT IN BANGLADESH

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June 1976

CS502 3/0

CASE STUDY NO. 3
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ABSTRACT

Case Study 3 examines the cultural and political milieu of Bangladesh, and places the Comilla project within the historical communication framework that contributed to the sucessful rural development communication of that project.

Syed A. Rahim, research associate at the East-West Communication Institute, was Deputy Director, Comilla Rural Development Academy, and later joined the Bangladesh Planning Commission as chief of the rural development sector. He earned his doctorate in communication from Michigan State University in 1968.

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OVERVIEW

The body of knowledge and experience in planning, implementing, and evaluating development programs is extensive and expanding rapidly. Yet understanding and appreciation of the role of communication in applying this knowledge are often lacking. Those with responsibility for conducting development programs suffer simultaneously from the "information explosion" and from the unavailability of *relevant* and *usable* knowledge. Techniques of application used successfully in one sector of development often have to be rediscovered in other sectors. Valuable experience gained in one country often remains unknown to other countries who face similar problems of using communication for development.

In response to this situation, the East-West Communication Institute conducts a variety of activities within its *Application of Knowledge* subdivision, which are designed to contribute new principles, techniques, and materials for more efficient information sharing and utilization. Since 1970, the Institute has been developing a comprehensive resource base to serve the needs of information, education, and communication (IEC) personnel in family and population planning programs throughout the world. It draws upon the experience gained in other areas of development communication while contributing valuable lessons learned in family and population planning. Today the Institute operates one of the most comprehensive collections of IEC materials available in the world. These include audiovisual materials; all are coded according to audience suitability and are made available on an exchange basis. This facilitates the flow of information and insures that the holdings of the collection are current. Other activities of this resource base include conferences, seminars, workshops, and problem-oriented research on the communication processes involved in linking those who are developing new knowledge with those who can apply it in development programs.

The Institute's case study series of the innovative application of communication theory and practice to the problems of family planning and population has been coordinated by Dr. D. Lawrence Kincaid and is an integral part of the IEC resource base. With the support of the U.S. Agency for International Development, this cooperative activity has grown out of a continuing interaction between Institute staff, other communication scholars, and the IEC staff of family and population planning programs. This case study research series is an example of the Institute's attempt to achieve the goal of better understanding through its work on communication problems of mutual concern to the East and West.

ROBERT P. WORRALL
Assistant Director, EWCI

SERIES PREFACE

The case study research series developed from the expressed need of development program officials and communication scholars for more useful and timely information about some of the innovative ideas and practices that are being applied throughout the world today to solve problems related to family planning and population. Intensive studies of one or more cases have often proven useful for the creation of new insights into a problem, new theories and principles, or new techniques for planned programs of change. A case study of a particularly successful communication activity is also an effective way for program officials to break outside the bounds of current policies and practices. To be useful for this purpose, such studies should accurately describe the activity and then analyze its underlying principles so that they can be more easily replicated elsewhere with the appropriate modifications.

One of the unique aspects of communication programs for development, especially for family planning and population, is the tendency for planners and program officials to search for new ideas and practices in countries which already have had more experience with the same problem. At the same time, those in more experienced programs are often interested in the pilot projects of new programs for similar reasons: to see what kind of ideas and opportunities they might have overlooked. In 1968, for example, a study team from Indonesia went to Taiwan to conduct a case study of their fieldworkers. After a month's study, they returned to Jakarta and recommended that fieldworkers be added to their other IEC activities for family planning. In 1969, they conducted their own pilot project with about thirty fieldworkers. After correcting many of their selecting and operating procedures, more fieldworkers were employed, and by 1971 they had expanded to over 5,000 fieldworkers who were responsible for motivating over one-third of all family planning adopters. The case study of fieldworkers in Taiwan played an important role in the transfer of this communication policy to Indonesia.

There are many examples of this kind of transfer of policy alternatives. The India *Nirodh* campaign has directly affected Kenya's *kinga* campaign, and a similar project for subsidized condom sales through commercial channels is also underway in Jakarta. Ideas like India's intensive vasectomy campaigns, Taiwan's and Indonesia's record systems, programs for newlyweds, telephone answering services, postpartum education, functional literacy, and so forth, are discussed continuously and circulated through conferences and other forms of international communication.

A case study is intensive research whose primary purpose is descriptive or comparative analysis. It investigates an intentionally limited or restricted range of

phenomena in a relatively thorough manner. It is usually less concerned with providing a data base for the generalization of results than with more extensive, quantitative research. It is based on the assumption that it is sometimes more useful to know a "lot about a little, than a little about a lot." Although a "case study" has a misleading reputation for being relatively less structured than other types of research, it is not unplanned, nor does it lack a well-prepared, rigorous research design. Depending upon the specific topic and the purpose of the researcher, a case study may include quantitative types of data, as well as descriptive information. The definition of a "case" may range from "one day in the life of a fieldworker" to "twenty-five years of experience in China." The particular advantage of limiting the study to one case, or comparing a small number of cases, is that as new ideas and new sources of data are encountered during the study, they can be pursued and thus enrich the final analysis.

This research series will present a wide variety of case study topics: the use of mothers' clubs in rural Korea, the use of traditional midwives in Asia, strategies for increasing elite support for family planning in Kenya, (a comparison of organizational communication in two family planning agencies), a comparison of themes, slogans, and nonverbal symbols used for family planning communication, family planning communication in the People's Republic of China, the uses of commercial resources, and so forth. We have not attempted to include all of the important innovations in family planning and population communication. Many institutions and organizations throughout the world are also contributing reports of new, or especially effective, communication activities. To avoid an unnecessary duplication of effort, we have collaborated with other institutions who desired to study the same topic. We have also attempted to select topics which might have otherwise been overlooked, or underreported. Finally, some preference has been given to activities where a substantial amount of information already existed, but had not yet been synthesized into a comprehensive report. All of the studies in this series were planned and conducted in cooperation with researchers from other institutions who were associated with, or knowledgeable about, the topic to be studied.

Case study research is in widespread use throughout the world today. With more planning and systematic direction, it can become an important means for sharing new ideas about mutual problems and for improving the implementation of communication policies and programs.

D. LAWRENCE KINCAID
Research Associate, EWCI

PREFACE

This case study outlines the trends of rural development communication in Bangladesh and places the processes of communication at work in the Comilla Rural Development project in a broad historical perspective. In so doing, it relates rural development communication to the larger framework of cultural and political change in Bangladesh.

The Comilla Project has been documented in various publications of the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development and in Arthur Raper's book *Rural Development in Action* (1970, Cornell University Press). But none of those publications has examined closely the intensive communication processes in Comilla that were probably a major factor behind the project's success.

I began working in Comilla in 1959 as a member of the professional team headed by Dr. Akhter Hameed Khan, director, Academy for Rural Development. My main responsibility was to organize research programs of the Academy, and thus I had the opportunity to observe and study the project closely. In 1972 I joined the Bangladesh Planning Commission to prepare the first five-year Rural Development Plan of Bangladesh. This analysis of the communication process in the Comilla Project is based mainly on my personal knowledge and experience – a participant's view from within the system.

This case study was carried out under an East-West Communication Institute research project on rural development communication. I am indebted to Professor Wilbur Schramm and Dr. Jack Lyle for their encouragement and support. The draft report was read by Professor Daniel Lerner, Professor Everett Rogers, Dr. Lyle Webster, and Dr. John Middleton. I am grateful to them for their comments and suggestions. My special thanks to Kay Garrett for her assistance in editing the report.

1

INTRODUCTION

More than 80 percent of the population of developing countries of Asia is rural, and today, most of that population lives in absolute poverty. The World Bank estimates that there are 550 million rural people in the developing countries of the world who are living on a per capita annual income of US $50.00 or less. About two-thirds of those people live in four countries—Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, and Pakistan (World Bank, 1975).

In Bangladesh, about 65 million people live in 64 thousand small villages crowded in an area of 55 thousand square miles. Ravaged by a series of natural calamities, a bloody civil war, and subsequent political turmoil, Bangladesh is now in a desperate situation. The future of the country depends on how its people work together for rural development. To that end communication will play a crucial role. In order to use communication for a massive mobilization of the people and their indigenous resources a better understanding of the relationship between communication and development is required. In a society having a long cultural tradition this understanding must be drawn on an historical perspective.

A Brief Social History

The Bengali people, living in the eastern part of the Indian subcontinent, have a distinct linguistic and cultural identity. The Bengal delta, a rich fertile plain, criss-crossed by two great rivers and their numerous tributaries, has always attracted permanent settlers as well as adventurous invaders. The Bengalis have withstood many political changes and they have absorbed many streams of cultural influence into their own system.

For two-thousand years Bengal had been a part of the successive empires of the Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, and British rulers of India. However, in the pre-British era Bengal achieved a great deal of autonomy, and at some times it enjoyed complete independence from the current imperial administrations. During the same period the Bengali culture was influenced and shaped by three great religions—Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam.

The Muslim rule in Bengal began in the thirteenth century under the Turks who brought a new world religion and a Middle Eastern culture. The Turkish rule was followed by the Afghan and the Mughal rule until the middle of the eighteenth century. During that long period, thousands of Muslim families of the imperial households, civil and military administrators, scholars, religious leaders, traders, artisans, soldiers, and workers settled in Bengal. The independent Muslim rulers made Bengal their new home land. The Muslim missionaries, with the support of the administration, spread the new gospels of Islam to the remotest corners of the country, and a large-scale conversion of the local Hindu population resulted. The cultural impact of Islam in Bengal was unprecedented, and in this respect, the Muslim period in Bengal was far more significant than the later British period. The British established a colony and did not integrate themselves into the Bengali society as the Muslims had.

Bengal's contact with the West began in the sixteenth century when Portuguese traders came and some of them settled in small enclaves. The Dutch, French, and British traders soon followed. The European intervention in Bengal took place in the eighteenth century with the decline of Muslim power in India. The East India Company's expansionist policy inevitably led to armed conflict between the English traders and the Nawab of Bengal and in 1757 Nawab Siraj-ud-daula was defeated by Robert Clive in the battle of Plassey.

With the establishment of British rule in Bengal the influence of Western culture increased rapidly because of the expansion of trade and commerce; the introduction of English education; the replacement of Persian, the official language of the Muslim rulers, by English; the social reforms introduced by the British administration; and the work of Christian missionaries. The Western ideas and innovations elicited two kinds of reaction in the Bengali society: (1) the established Hindu and Muslim leaders were alarmed by, and became hostile toward, the Western cultural

influences. They received good support from the peasant society, which was being ruthlessly oppressed by the greedy British traders and indigo planters. A number of armed revolts resulted. Although the revolts were effectively suppressed the British administration became concerned about the potential dangers to their continued rule if it imposed great social and institutional changes on the rural society.

(2) The emerging urban and English-educated class of Bengalis was greatly impressed by the new liberal and humanitarian elements of Western culture and the richness of Western literature. They were eager to adopt and promote those values and expected that the British rulers would also be guided by them. They organized social reform movements, but their influence could not deeply penetrate the rural society. A feudal agrarian policy and the lack of emphasis on mass education by the British administration were mainly responsible for the slow rate of social change in Bengal.

The recent history of Bengal is marked by significant political changes and economic decline. When India gained independence in 1947, the province of Bengal in British India was partitioned—the larger eastern part formed a province (East Pakistan) of independent Pakistan, and the western part formed a state (West Bengal) of independent India. East Bengal (East Pakistan) was thus an agricultural hinterland of the urban-industrial area around the Indian city of Calcutta in West Bengal. For the Bengalis in East Pakistan this loss of what had been their urban-industrial center created great economic and social problems. As a province of Pakistan East Bengal continued to suffer politically and economically from constant neglect by the somewhat colonial policy of the central government of Pakistan which was seated 1000 miles away in the western wing of Pakistan.

The growing economic disparity between the two wings of Pakistan created the conditions for the rise of a Bengali nationalistic struggle for autonomy in neglected East Pakistan. In 1952 the central government of Pakistan declared a language policy that made Urdu the state language of Pakistan; it thus completely disregarded the facts that the Bengali language and literature were richer and more developed than Urdu, and that 52 percent of the population of Pakistan spoke Bengali. The language policy was formulated on the assumption that Urdu, the major language of Muslim culture in the subcontinent, would facilitate integration between the two wings of Pakistan. The Bengali population

in East Pakistan reacted violently to the language policy. They saw it as an elitist instrument of exploitation. The students of Dacca University organized a language movement that demanded that Bengali be made one of the two state languages of Pakistan. The movement received a massive upwelling of support from the workers and the peasants after the police shot and killed several student demonstrators in Dacca on 21 February 1952.

The language movement played a crucial role in the subsequent development of a nationalistic vernacular elite, and in bridging the gap between the new elite and the rural population in East Pakistan (Jahan, 1972). It encouraged the Bengali intelligentsia and the professionals to analyze the causes and processes of the economic disparity between the two wings of Pakistan and to formulate a strategy for the struggle for autonomy and self-determination. The activists of the movement went beyond the language issue and created a political movement by making the rural population aware of the extent and nature of the socioeconomic inequities created by the policies and practices of the central government of Pakistan. The final consequences of this was a civil war in 1971. The Bengali liberation movement, with the help of India, defeated the Pakistani occupation army in December 1971 and established the independent nation of Bangladesh.

Bengali people now live in Bangladesh. However, in cultural terms there is one significant difference between Bangladesh and the former province of Bengal in British India. In Bengal province the Hindus were economically and culturally dominant. This is no longer true – although 15 percent of the population of Bangladesh are Hindus most of the rich, educated, and influential Hindus migrated to India after the partition of Bengal.

Because of the political changes, economic exploitation by external forces, and lack of natural resources the people of what is now Bangladesh have experienced, over the past century, very little growth in urbanization and industrialization. The process of growth was constrained in the early period of British rule when the East India Company systematically undermined the rich textile industries of East Bengal. The location of the British capital in Calcutta stimulated rapid urban growth at the cost of the decline of the urban centers of East Bengal. After the partition, East Bengal lost the single, great, urban and industrial center of Calcutta, which had been built by its agricultural surplus.

And again, during the Pakistan period, the major part of the accumulated agricultural wealth of East Bengal was siphoned off and invested in the industries, urban centers, and military complexes located in West Pakistan.

At the same time, the growth of agriculture had been very slow and lagged behind the high rate of population growth. Periodic crop failures and devastations by floods and cyclones had gravely impaired the social and economic life. Rural poverty and unrest multiplied, thus creating serious problems for the government administration.

An Overview of Communication

The growth or constraint of the development of modern mass media in Bengal took place under various perceptions of needs by the English and Bengali elites and the government administration. The first newspaper, an English weekly, was published by an Irishman in Calcutta in 1780. The first Bengali newspaper was published in Calcutta in 1818, and the vernacular press grew rapidly during the mid-nineteenth century. Both the conservative and progressive leaders of the middle and upper class society used the press for debates and discussions on the issues of social reform in Bengal and for the policies and programs of the colonial British administration. Later on, the Bengali press became an important channel of communication for the nationalistic independence movements. The press remained in the private sector, but the government administration at various times imposed many restrictions, particularly on the vernacular press. The local and rural press were stunted by the low level of literacy and by financial problems.

Telecommunication and broadcasting were maintained as a government monopoly under the Indian Telegraph Act of 1885. A private broadcasting service was started in Calcutta in 1926, but it was taken over by the government in 1930. Since then, the government has maintained ownership and control over those media and used them primarily as tools of business and administration. Government control and regulation of the mass media continued during the post-British period. However, the growth of mass media has been much faster in recent years than before. In the Sixties the coverage of radio increased sharply and television was introduced on a limited scale. The press and the broadcasting media also began to respond more actively to the needs of development communication.

Communication and Rural Development

The great size of population and the mass poverty and illiteracy in rural Bengal present serious problems of developmental administration and communication for the government. In the past, capital investments in the rural areas had been grossly inadequate, but the government has made serious attempts at building institutions for reaching the rural people and has sought their participation in development. In this regard, Bangladesh has a long and rich experience not commonly found in other developing countries. Recently, a pilot project on rural development initiated by the Comilla Academy for Rural Development achieved much success and international recognition as an innovative approach toward rural development. This project has greatly influenced the current policies and strategies of rural development in Bangladesh.

This case study examines in a limited historical perspective, the communication aspects of rural development in Bangladesh. The recent experiences, particularly of the Comilla project, are studied in detail in order to understand how development communication is institutionalized at the rural level and its consequences. The study does not focus on the structure and role of the mass communication based on modern technology. It would be of little relevance to do so given the context of Bengali rural society and government development programs. However, this analysis should help in understanding the unique role of mass communication and its *potential* linkages with the organizational and interpersonal communication often used in rural development programs in the other developing countries.

2

COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE: A REVIEW OF PAST EXPERIENCES

The structure of communication in a society is determined largely by the growth and development of technology and by economic and cultural institutions. Communication is also influenced by great ideas. To the extent that societies differ in their patterns of economic and cultural change, their communication patterns also are likely to differ from one another. Therefore, in a study of development communication it is useful to take an historical look at these changing patterns.

The Ancient Traditions

Comparative studies of communication and culture support the notion that the situation in Asia cannot be fully understood in terms of the concepts of Western rhetoric. In a recent study of ancient India and China, Robert T. Oliver has made some interesting observations on the norms and roles of communication in the East (Oliver, 1971). According to his analysis, the traditional role of the speaker, or the *source* of communication, in ancient Indian cultures (Hindu and Buddhist) is *not* one of advocacy. Rather, the speaker represents an authority figure who delivers the "correct" and "proper" messages. That message usually represents traditional and communal wisdom. The audience, or *receiver* of communication, has a subordinate role in relation to the speaker. The audience is not passive, but its primary role is to listen and to learn from the speaker. The mode of communication is usually ceremonial and ritualistic. Consequently, there are formal prescriptions for the proper way of speaking or listening. Direct face-to-face communication is valued as the most reliable and authentic form of communication. The purpose of communication is to promote social harmony rather than individual well-being; to reinforce stability and order rather than to bring change and growth.

These ancient traditions of communication are no longer dominant in the contemporary Asian societies. The influence of Islamic and Western culture in the Indian subcontinent has substantially altered the ancient traditions. However, their influence is still noticeable in the more traditional rural sector of the society and many religious and social leaders still use the ancient forms in delivering new messages to the rural audience.

The Muslim Period: 1201-1757

Bengal was under Muslim rule for 556 years, from 1201 to 1757. During that time the Bengali society experienced an unprecedented cultural transformation. The Muslims not only brought a new religion but also a highly-organized system of administration and an egalitarian culture radically different from the local Hindu and Buddhist cultures.

The Muslim imperial rulers introduced elaborate systems of revenue collection and legal administration that established new channels of communication between the government and the people. The scope of trade and commerce was greatly enlarged. After a long period of isolation, Bengal was again integrated into a vast Indian empire and stronger linkages were established with the world outside the Indian subcontinent.

The imperial administration instituted a system of intelligence gathering and news reporting services. Hundreds of news reporters periodically dispatched local news on significant political and economic events to the authorities. The imperial orders, circulars, and instructions were transmitted downward through the hierarchy of military, civil, and revenue administrations. A large number of imperial officials were posted in various parts of Bengal; many of them established permanent residence. With the officials came the scholars, poets, musicians, artisans, traders, teachers, and religious leaders who brought new values, ideas, skills, and a new style of life.

Rural Bengal during the Muslim period was ruled, for all practical purposes, by the *zaminders* – a small number of feudal landlords and many small landlords. They enjoyed a great deal of autonomy, collected revenue, maintained law and order, and looked after the welfare of the people. As long as they showed allegiance to the Muslim emperor and his governor and paid their revenue and tributes, their local autonomy was rarely disturbed by the imperial administration. Occasionally,

the powerful landlords ignored the imperial administration and asserted their own independence. They were an active force against over-centralization of the imperial administration.

The *zaminders* were autocratic and often oppressive in imposing various exactions on their subjects. But they patronized the arts, literature, and music; they built mosques, temples, schools, roads, bridges, water tanks, markets, rest houses, and other public facilities. In those philanthropic and cultural acts the *zaminders* were influenced and guided by the religious leaders.

During the Muslim period, and particularly in the seventeenth century, Bengal enjoyed economic prosperity. There was a rapid growth in affluent urbanization, mainly promoted by the Muslim rulers. The cities were the centers of educational and cultural activities patronized by the rich and influential members of the community. City life provided luxury and sensuous pleasures for the wealthy and powerful people. In contrast, village life was modest and puritan, centered around religion. The village economy was at subsistence level and self-sustained, but there was no wide-scale poverty.

The Influence of Religion

Religion played a crucial role in the communication and cultural life of medieval, rural Bengal. There were different kinds of religious traditions, but the two most influential new movements were *Sufism* and *Neo-Vaishnavism.*

Sufism

Sufism was an Islamic movement that advocated the advancement of spiritual life. Its teaching guided the followers to the attainment of *marifat* (perfect knowledge) of God, the only reality diffused through all things and phenomena. The way to *marifat* was the negation of materialistic tendencies and the loss of egocentric consciousness. Living a simple life, preaching Islam, imparting religious and spiritual education, and helping the poor and the underprivileged were the basic tenets of *Sufism* in Bengal. The *Sufis* believed that winning the hearts of the people by spiritual instruction and humanitarian work was equivalent to love of God.

A large number of *Sufi* saints and ascetics came to Bengal from central Asia via northern India. Most of them accompanied the military commanders and imperial officers. The *Sufis* were not just wandering saints. A large number of them settled down and integrated themselves into the local communities in different parts of Bengal.

The *Sufi* saints gathered devoted disciples around them and established *khanqahs*. Each such abode was a center of learning and a rest-giving refuge that provided lodging for the poor, destitute wanderers and mendicants. The common people believed that these saints were "endowed with superhuman powers like giving relief to the poor, sick and destitute, being present at several places at a time, giving life to the dead, killing anybody at will, and telling the future" (Karim, 1959).

Many of the *Sufi* saints spent their whole lives serving the people. Consequently, their devoted work created a lasting institution in Bengal. The places where they were buried became renowned *dargahs*. These shrines, daily visited by hundreds of people and attended by many more on special occasions, provided a powerful source of moral and spiritual communication. The disciples of a saint voluntarily contributed the money and labor needed to maintain his educational and public service activities. However, over time those powerful institutions lost their vitality and became the strongholds of conservative and reactionary religious leaders.

Neo-Vaishnavism

Neo-Vaishnavism was a powerful revival movement within Hinduism. The foundation of that movement was a strong faith in the supremacy of *bhakti* (devotion) and *prema* (love) over *jnana* (knowledge). The way to salvation was faith and devotion, not knowledge and rationality. The devotion and love was to be absolute and specifically expressed in total submission to the lord *Krishna* and his paramour *Radha*. In the popular form the submission took the form of an ecstatic and vicarious participation in the love-dalliance of *Krishna, Radha,* and her playmates. The devotee was to participate as a female companion of *Radha* (Raichaudhury, 1953). The best expression of devotion consisted of chanting the name of *Krishna*. The ecstatic recitation of *Krishna* was considered superior to all other sacrifices and actions.

These messages of *Sufism* and *Neo-Vaishnavism* dealt with love and devotion, submission and compassion—matters of the soul rather than of the mind. The popular communication of such messages could be best done by poetry, ballads, music, songs, dancing, and dramatic arts. Therefore, Bengali literature, music, and the arts flourished under the influence of these two popular religious movements and the patronage of the rulers and *zaminders*. Emotional and ecstatic chanting, singing, and dancing became popular forms of communication in social and religious activities.

The communication pattern in the social life of rural Bengal was influenced by an important kind of social relationship promoted by *Sufism* and *Neo-Vaishnavism*. That relationship was based on the ancient *tantric* practice of adopting a *guru* (spiritual leader). The *guru-chela* or *murshid-murid* (terms for leader-follower among Hindus and Muslims respectively) relationship was an *authoritarian* communication model. Under its norms the *chela* (*murid*) was duty-bound to seek information, guidance, advice, and instruction, on all important religious as well as secular matters from his *guru* (*murshid*). The *guru's* messages were to be believed and accepted without any question or doubt. They could be questioned or disregarded only at the cost of grave personal danger and loss of faith. Similarly the *guru* was to be responsible for the welfare of his *chela*, whom he must guide on the path of salvation.

The British Period: 1757-1947

During the period of declining Mughal power in India, Bengal enjoyed independence and prosperity under two able Nawabs—Murshid-kuli Khan and Alivardi. However, the fall of the great Mughal empire created a deep political vacuum, and Bengal could not escape the consequences. Economic and social life in Bengal was damaged severely by widespread factionalism, lawlessness, and repeated invasion, plunder, and piracy by the Marathas, Maghs, Portuguese, and other adventurers. Finally, Bengal lost its independence to the East India Company in the Battle of Plassey in 1756.

The East India Company was concerned primarily with its commercial interests, and it neglected the problems of political instability. The company's trade monopoly and protectionist policies ruined the

rich textile industries of Bengal. The maladministration by the company officials, their private financial greed, and the practice of gift-taking opened a period of unabashed plunder (Spear, 1972).

The consolidation of British power in Bengal began with the administration of Hastings and Cornwallis. The rampant corruption and inefficiency among the company officials and their local agents were brought under control. Cornwallis came to Bengal a decade after his surrender to George Washington in the American War of Independence. But in Bengal his contribution was fundamental to building the basis of British dominion in India. He improved the Mughal structure of revenue and civil administration and placed British officers in all positions of significance. These British officers formed an efficient and exclusive class of administrators—the forerunner of the famed Indian Civil Service.

The greatest contribution of Cornwallis was in the area of land reform and administration. He instituted the permanent settlement act under which a new class of *zaminders*, or landlords, was created. The *zaminders* were given permanent ownership of land subject to regular and timely payment of a fixed revenue to the government. He became an intermediary who leased land to the tenants and collected revenue from them. He was no longer responsible for the maintenance of peace and overseeing the welfare of the people. Cornwallis hoped that the new system would simplify and improve revenue collection, encourage the *zaminders* to improve agriculture, and benefit the tenants. Some legal provisions were included in the act to protect the tenants from excessive exaction by the *zaminders*. But, in practice, the permanent settlement created an exploitative class of aristocrats who lived a life of luxury at the expense of the peasants. The *zaminders* took little or no interest in agriculture or rural industry because their income was not dependent directly on the productivity of the land or on labor. The *zaminders* were more related to the urban than the rural life. Permanent settlement doomed the peasantry of Bengal.

Note that Bengal was passing through a phase of socioeconomic regression while the West was experiencing the great Industrial Revolution. There was no lack of contact and communication between Bengal and the West, but the merchants of the East India Company did not bring the messages of industrialization to Bengal. Their main concern was the exploitation of the resources of Bengal to feed the growing industries in England. Bengali leaders, particularly the Muslims, were demoralized

after the loss of their ruling position, and they failed to understand the significance of the rapid changes and opportunities created by the Industrial Revolution in the West. Instead, they chose a reactionary path in opposing the new values and ideas and bemoaning their lost glories.

In the first half of the nineteenth century the Benthamites, Evangelicals, and the proponents of free trade in England pressed for social reform in British India. The policy was intended to eliminate the morally offensive local customs and practices and to build Western institutions to match the native institutions. Persian was replaced by English as the official language. In Lord Macaulay's words, the British education policy was directed at creating "a class of persons Indian in blood but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and intellect." The Evangelicals considered it their moral duty to bring spiritual reforms and win the souls of Indians for Christ. The protagonists of free trade pressed for economic reforms (Spear, 1972).

The reform measures adopted by the British created a great deal of unrest. The educated, intellectual, and influential Bengalis suddenly found themselves powerless and isolated from the new political and administrative life. The orthodox Muslim leaders, already disturbed by the influence of *Sufism* and *Neo-Vaishnavism*, found the changes intolerable. The result was a series of violent reaction and reform movements aimed at the revival of orthodox Islam and Muslim power in Bengal. The *Faraidi* and *Wahabi* movements preached a strict monotheism and rejected the British reform measures (Mallick, 1961). Their advocates worked in the rural areas and organized the poor peasants against the new sources of power—the *zaminders*, money lenders, and indigo planters. The oppressive nature of those "elites" made it easy to gain the peasants' support. The movements took the form of *jihad* or holy war against the evils of foreign rule.

The *Faraidi* and *Wahabi* movements were confined to the Muslim population and therefore, did not become a national struggle against colonial power, but they did contribute to the final violent reaction against British rule—the great mutiny of 1857. The revolt of the Indian armed forces began in Bengal and spread quickly to the rest of India. For some time the revolution appeared to be successful, but ultimately it was ruthlessly suppressed. In 1858 the British crown directly assumed the governing role in British India, and thus ended the rule of the East India Company. A new era commenced during which the government began to make serious efforts to reach the rural population.

The new British policies for communication, popular participation, and rural development were based on great ideas generated by the intellectual exercises of scholar-administrators and by the study of practical conditions in the rural areas. The policies were also influenced by the Fabian socialist movement in England. The general strategy was to build new rural institutions—local self-government and cooperatives—and to attack rural problems on both the political and economic fronts.

The basic principles of local self-government were formulated by Lord Ripon in his famous resolution of 1882 and they emphasized the importance of small primary units of local government to ensure local knowledge and participation and control from within by elected members. But in practice those principles were violated because the administration wanted to keep the local government under its direct and strong control. Although an elaborate structure of local government was introduced in Bengal, the local bodies' lack of administrative authority and financial power made them ineffective. The local government could do very little to solve the basic problems of providing the physical infrastructure of roads, bridges, irrigation canals, and flood control structures that were the foundation for the growth and development of agriculture. The ability of local government was also very limited in providing education, health, and other social services.

On the economic front a cooperative movement was started in 1912. Credit banks were established to supply supervised, institutional credits to the cultivators, but the program failed to make a significant impact because of inadequate educational and other support programs. There was nothing comparable to the American land grant college and agriculture extension system. To remedy the situation the Royal Agriculture Commission Report of 1928 recommended the following: "the people must be organized to help themselves and their local organizations must be grouped into larger unions, until a machinery has been built to convey to every village whatever the different departments have to send it. . . . only through the medium of cooperative associations can the teaching of experts be brought to multitudes who would never be reached individually." However, the principles underlying those recommendations were never operationalized, and no serious attempt was ever made to put them into practice. Soon, the British administration was too busy with containing the rising and often violent movements of independence.

In the 1920s a new practice of social service and adult education became popular among the government administrators. This was the result of dedicated practical work and writing by a few civil servants, notably F.L. Brayne and Malcom Darling. Brayne saw the primary task of rural development as changing the attitudes of rural people towards agriculture, health, sanitation, etc. That could be done by intensive propaganda and educational efforts using the mass media and direct personal contacts. He advocated a kind of "Socratic dialogue" with the village people to make them aware of their problems. Then the villagers would reform themselves (Brayne, 1928). Brayne's work in the Punjab inspired a few government administrators in Bengal, notably Mohammed Ishaque, who organized a rural reconstruction movement in Bengal.

The nationalistic and independence movement during the 1920s and 1930s was a source of powerful ideas and approaches to rural development. The Gandhian approach of rural reconstruction promoted the idea of self-sufficient village economy based on agriculture and handicrafts. The ideal elements of Gandhian village life were the physical cleanliness of the village, vegetarian diet, coarse clothes made from spinning wheel yarns, basic education, and community prayers. The solution of rural problems was sought in rejecting the evils of industrial culture and adopting a simple, good, moral life. The Gandhian methods of communication were education, persuasion, and prayer by dedicated workers who lived in an *ashram** in the village and worked with the poor and *underprivileged rural people* (Gandhi, 1952).

Another approach to rural development was promoted by the Nobel laureate poet, Rabindranath Tagore. He emphasized the scientific study of rural problems, and the introducation of science and technology within a broader framework of cultural development that was enriched by poetry, music, and fine arts. Tagore established two educational institutions—the Shantiniketan and Sriniketan—staffed by internationally renowned Bengalis and foreign scholars. His ideas mainly influenced a segment of idealistic intellectuals.

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*The campus of Gandhian educational/social service institution where the teachers and workers live, work, and pray together.

3

THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND BASIC DEMOCRACIES PROGRAMS IN EAST PAKISTAN

The British rule in India ended in 1947 when the country was partitioned and two independent dominions, India and Pakistan, were formed. The greater eastern half of Bengal became a province of Pakistan and the western part became a state of India. An immediate impact of the partition was a great migration of population between India and Pakistan. A large part of the Hindu population of East Pakistan migrated to India and a corresponding number of Muslim population from India migrated to East Pakistan. The migration of the Hindu *zaminders* to India created the conditions for a long-needed land reform in East Pakistan. In 1951 the government of Pakistan abolished the permanent settlement model and adopted a new agrarian policy that restored the status of the cultivators. Under that new policy the state acquired all land, but it maintained only nominal ownership. The tenants were given all ownership rights and privileges subject to direct payment of revenue to the government. To support the new system the government also launched a national community development program known as the Village Agricultural and Industrial Development (V-AID) program.

The V-AID Program

The Village Agricultural and Industrial program was similar to the community development program in India and the Philippines. The theoretical basis of the program were the ideas and principles of community development promoted by American sociologists and development economists plus the methodology of central planning for development. The practical strength of the program came from financial aid and technical assistance provided by the United States and the United Nations. The V-AID program dominated the rural development scene in East Pakistan

in the fifties. Almost the entire rural area was covered by the program, and a new department, with adequate financial and personnel resources, was created to handle it. There is no doubt that the program created a great deal of awareness within the rural population about the needs and possibilities of development activities. For the first time, the majority of the rural population came in direct contact with the development agents of the government.

The V-AID program was based on the principles of self-help, local program building, and democratic community action. The identification of felt needs and the building of development activities around those needs were considered vital for rural development (GOP, 1956). The main emphasis of the program was on the diffusion of new ideas and practices for solving the problems of agriculture, health, education, etc. that had been identified by the people themselves with the help of the community development workers. Accordingly, a cadre of village-level workers (VLWs) was created to inform, teach, guide, and help the community leaders and individual families in the villages. To support the VLW, subject matter specialists (agronomist, public health officer, etc.) were placed at the *thana* (county) level under a development officer. Each VLW was in charge of 10-15 villages, inhabited by a total 1500-3000 families. Each development officer, with his small group of specialists and VLWs, was responsible for 25-300 villages in the *thana*.

The communication pattern in the V-AID program was an improvement over traditional bureaucratic communication. The defined role of the development officer and the VLW was that of a friendly persuasive communicator, and attempts were made to train them for that new role. They made direct contacts with the village people and responded to their information needs. The VLW often acted as a mediator between the departmental specialists and the village families who were interested in the services offered by the governmental departments. Thus, the V-AID organization facilitated the extension of government services to the village level.

The VLW was a multipurpose worker. His knowledge and skill were limited to simple problems of agriculture, health, and other subjects. His effectiveness as a communicator of technical information was dependent on the availability of support from the specialists at the *thana* level. In this regard the program's resources were inadequate. The specialists were not properly trained to meet the requirements of the villages.

The government departments to which the specialist belonged operated at a level where innovative problem-solving was not possible. There was very little attention to research and development on the problems stated by the villagers. The problems of social organization and institutional change to support technical change were beyond the scope of the activities of the V-AID and other government organizations. There was no effective political or social organization on which the V-AID could depend for the mobilization of the rural leaders and groups.

The department of V-AID was an addition to the existing bureaucratic structure of development administration. But, its financial and personnel resources were better than the other nation-building departments. The planning of activities of V-AID was initiated at the central office where the targets were fixed and the financial allocation was made for each of the areas under the development officers. The development officer prepared local plans on the basis of the target and allocation. There was no effective mechanism for coordinating those plans with the activities of the other departments. Although the need for coordination was greatly emphasized by the government, in practice the coordination was nominal, and the result was a great deal of confusion and inter-departmental conflict.

The central planning and evaluation unit of the V-AID administration demanded a great deal of information and statistical reporting from the field officers for which various schedules and questionnaires were prescribed. The emphasis on targets and statistics and their compilation at the national level created a burden of paper work and the resultant inaccurate and false reporting of achievements. Those problems became serious as the program rapidly expanded.

In 1960 mounting criticism against V-AID made the government and the aid-giving agencies doubtful about its efficiency and utility. Earlier, a political change had taken place—the parliamentary system of government had been abolished by the military regime of President Ayub Khan. The new government abolished V-AID and put forth a grand design for sociopolitical modernization.

The Basic Democracies Program

The Basic Democracies program introduced by General Ayub Khan in 1960, was a kind of local government under the direct guidance and control of the president of Pakistan. It was designed to

provide a political structure in support of the Ayub regime and its policy of rapid economic development and modernization. One of the main purposes of the Basic Democracies program was the mobilization of rural population, particularly the rural elites, for development. Unlike the V-AID program the Basic Democracies program recognized the importance of political processes as the mainspring of economic development and modernization.

The main structure of the Basic Democracies program was a hierarchy of four tiers of institutions, two of which were at the rural level. The lowest tier was the Union, a unit comprising 10-15 villages. The Union Council was a body of 6-9 members (called *basic democrats*) elected directly by the people of the Union on an adult franchise basis. The members of the Union Council elected their chairman. The functions of the Union Council were broadly defined to include both civic and development activities. The basic democrats were also designated as the electoral college for the presidency and the legislative assemblies. The responsibility and power of the Union Council were broader than any previous local government unit at the village level.

The second tier of Basic Democracies was the *thana* level. The chairman of the union councils and an equal number of government officers at the *thana* level constituted the *Thana* Council. The civil administration officer in charge of the subdivision presided over the *thana* councils in his subdivision. The Circle Officer (civil administration officer at the *thana* level) was the chief executive of the *Thana* Council. The main functions of the *Thana* Council were planning, coordinating, and supervising the activities of local government at the village level.

The activities of the union and *thana* councils were regulated under the Basic Democracies orders. The responsibility for implementation and regulation of the program was vested in the civil administration. The chief controlling officer was the Deputy Commissioner, who normally was a member of the elite civil service of Pakistan. He held great financial and administrative authority including the power to remove an elected member of the local council from office on charges of misconduct and misuse of power.

The most important development function of the union and *thana* councils was the planning and implementation of the rural works program. This program was designed to improve the physical infrastructure of roads, bridges, small irrigation and flood control structures,

and to provide employment in the rural area. It provided opportunities for the rural people to identify and implement small schemes on the long neglected problems of transportation, drainage, irrigation, and unemployment of the poor, landless laborers. The elected representatives in the local council found an opportunity to mobilize local resources and obtain government grants in implementing development projects in their constituency. They also established better contacts with the administrative and technical agencies of the government and obtained an understanding of how such agencies operate in nation-building activities.

In implementing the basic democracies and rural works programs the government organized unprecedented campaigns for communication and education. The administrative resources of the government, voluntary organizations, educational and cultural institutions were brought to bear on those campaigns (Rushbrook Williams, 1962). The mass media were influenced to play very active roles in the communication campaigns Special films, posters, and printed material were prepared and widely distributed. The government agencies organized seminars and discussion sessions. Large and colorful conventions of the basic democrats were held in the cities and towns. President Ayub, his provincial governors, and other senior officials toured the country and addressed the conventions and specially organized public meetings. In all those activities attempts were made to directly reach the 45,000 elected members of the local councils in East Pakistan and to obtain their support for the policy and programs of the government. In addition, training and orientation programs were held for the officers engaged in the administrative, supervisory, and technical activities related to the basic democracies and rural works programs.

The main flow of communication in the basic democracies system was between the government bureaucracy and the members of the local councils, particularly the chairmen of the union council. The important messages from the government directly reached most of the basic democrats through the mass media, official circulars, and personal contacts with the officers. The basic democrats had better access to the mass media and official sources of information than the common villagers because of their higher education and social status in the village society. At one time the government distributed radios to the unions with the hope that group listening in the union council office would extend the coverage of the broadcast media, but in most cases, the

radios served only the chairman or other members of the council at their residences, and were soon useless through neglect. Similarly, most of the printed material distributed by the government remained unused in the office of the union council.

The reverse flow of information from the basic democrats to the government was not as direct. The basic democrat had direct contacts with the circle officer and other *thana* level officers. Beyond that, their communication with the government was filtered through those officers. Communication between the poor, illiterate villagers and the government depended on how the basic democrats and the *thana* officials performed as mediators in the communication network.

In practice the communication process was influenced by the patterns of local politics. Three factors were particularly important: (a) the elite social position of the basic democrats in the rural society, (b) the factionalism in the union council, and (c) the patronage power of the local officers of the government and their links to the village factions (Rashiduzzaman, 1968). The first two factors inhibited free flow and exchange of information and ideas within the village. The local leaders, often supported by city politicians and officers, controlled communication in order to maneuver in the political battles. Except during elections they seldom took any initiative in communicating with the common people. Their main communication role was to transmit messages from their city patrons. They also received complaints, petitions, and requests for personal favor from the village families in distress. They neglected to discuss ideas and projects for development in open public meetings, although such activities were prescribed as one of their main duties.

A third factor distorted communication between the people and the government. The local officers found it convenient and often necessary to align themselves with the village influentials. Their partisan role influenced communication within and outside the villages.

The content of communication flowing through the basic democracies system was mainly political and administrative information and directives. An evaluation study showed that most of the discussions in the union council were initiated by letters and verbal instructions from the supervising government officials. The resolutions in the union council were mostly taken to show compliance with the government directives (Rahman, 1962).

The union council had no direct responsibility for the dissemination of technical innovation and information on agriculture, health, and other subjects; the departments and agencies of the government performed those functions. The union council had neither an extension officer of its own nor administrative control over the extension workers of the government agencies.

The basic democracies and the rural works program carried out by it achieved notable success in the initial years. A network of feeder roads improved rural transportation; there was some improvement in the rural unemployment situation as the landless laborers found employment during dry seasons when agricultural activities were low. The basic democrats acquired some experience in designing and implementing small development schemes.

However, the program faltered in the later years. As the political opposition against the authoritarian government of Ayub grew, the regime began to manipulate the basic democracies for political support, and openly used the bureaucracy to allure the basic democrats or to pressure them for political support. In that process the administration's attention shifted from development to election politics. Moreover, poor planning and evaluation of the development projects, over-emphasis on road building, lack of maintenance of the completed projects, and poor and irregular financial audits on the local use of funds led to waste, misuse, and misappropriation of works program funds (Sobhan, 1968). The local councils neglected the proper identification and designing of development schemes; irrigation and flood control schemes were ignored; the practice of engaging professional contractors instead of local project committees, for even simple schemes, became common. These deviations from the principles of the works program created many blocks to popular participation.

Finally, the reduction of international aid, particularly of P.L. 480 funds from the United States, created serious financial problems for the works program. The grant allocations to the local councils for works program were much reduced, and the main development function of the basic democracy system became secondary.

4

THE COMILLA PROGRAM

The efforts of the government of Pakistan at building new institutions for rural development were not limited to local government and community development organizations at the rural level. To support those institutions some of the existing government agencies were reorganized and new organizations established. The most important step in that direction was the establishment of two Academies for Rural Development in the two wings of Pakistan, one in Comilla, East Pakistan and the other in Peshawar, West Pakistan. The plans for the academies were drawn in the mid-Fifties and their operations actually started in 1959.* The two academies, particularly the Comilla Academy in East Pakistan, greatly influenced the evolution of rural development policies and programs in Pakistan.

The Comilla Academy

The Comilla Academy was headed by Akhter Hameed Khan, a scholar and experienced public administrator. As a former member of the prestigious Indian Civil Service, principal of a college, and an honorary director of the V-AID program, Khan had deep knowledge of conditions in the rural areas and the problems of development administration. He was keenly interested in rural development and highly motivated to develop new institutional patterns within the existing socio-political structure of the country. His associates, the senior members of

*The Ford Foundation and Michigan State University provided advisory services, staff training facilities, and an initial grant for project activities.

the faculty of the Academy, were highly qualified professionals representing various social science disciplines and specialities. The nine senior faculty positions were: (1) Rural Administration, (2) Rura' Sociology, (3) Social Psychology, (4) Development Economics, (4) Rural Business Management, (6) Agricultural Extension, (7) Education, (8) Women's Program, and (9) Research Methodology. Director Khan and his associates attended a special year-long seminar at Michigan State University. The Ford Foundation assisted in the staff development and the experimental projects of the Academy.

The original charter of the Academy described its purposes as organizing training programs for senior V-AID officers and conducting research on rural development. But when the Academy began functioning in 1959 the V-AID program was being abolished and the basic democracies program was being introduced by the government of General Ayub Khan. The new government was interested in launching a massive rural development program and was looking for models and techniques. Director Khan decided to initiate experiments and pilot projects to discover and design new program models. His decision was crucial in shaping the later activities of the Academy. Consequently, its training and research became action-oriented and were closely linked to rural development policy and planning activities of the government (Raper, 1970).

Academy's Project Area

In 1960 the Academy obtained permission from the government to conduct pilot projects on rural development in Comilla *thana.* A brief description of the condition of the project area will be helpful in understanding the problems of rural development in East Pakistan. The following description refers to the condition of Comilla *thana* in 1960.

The Comilla *thana* is an area of 107 square miles inhabited by 200,000 people. The population density is 2000 people per square mile. The average farm size is 1.7 acres; one-fifth of the rural families do not own land, yet more than 80 percent of the population is dependent on agriculture. The area is frequently affected by floods during the monsoon season. In the dry winter months almost the entire farm land remain idle. The major crops are rice, vegetables, and sugarcane; crop yields are very low and the area is deficient in food crops production.

Eighty percent of the popu[illegible]nd the rest are Hindu. Bengali is the language of the [illegible] The literacy rate is about 20 percent. The women are segr[illegible]e primarily engaged in household work including home processing of the farm products.

The Comilla town is located in the center of the *thana*. It is the headquarters of the district of Comilla and has the government offices, schools and colleges, hospitals, shops, markets, banks, and other facilities. There is no major industrial establishment in Comilla *thana*. Although the approximately 350 villages in Comilla *thana* are located within a radius of 10 miles from the town, communication is limited by the poor condition of roads in the villages and inadequate transporation facilities. The mass media reaches only a small percentage—the relatively prosperous fraction—of the rural population.

Comilla *thana* is atypical of the 413 *thanas* of East Pakistan. While its main problems are similar to those of rural areas elsewhere in the country, in several respects Comilla is worse off than many other *thanas* in East Pakistan.

The Academy's Pilot Projects

During the period 1959-1963 the Academy organized a number of pilot projects on rural development in Comilla *thana*. The most important projects were: (a) The Agriculture Cooperative Project, (b) The Rural Works Project, and (c) The *Thana* Training and Development Center (see Figure 1).

THE AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVE PROJECT

This consists of voluntary cooperatives at the village level and a federation of village cooperatives at the *thana* level (see Figure 1). The village cooperative is a small association of peasants representing about 50 families. It is run by an elected managing committee and three honorary office holders: the *chairman*, the *manager*, and the *model farmer*.*

*A good farmer trained to perform the role of village level agricultural extension agent.

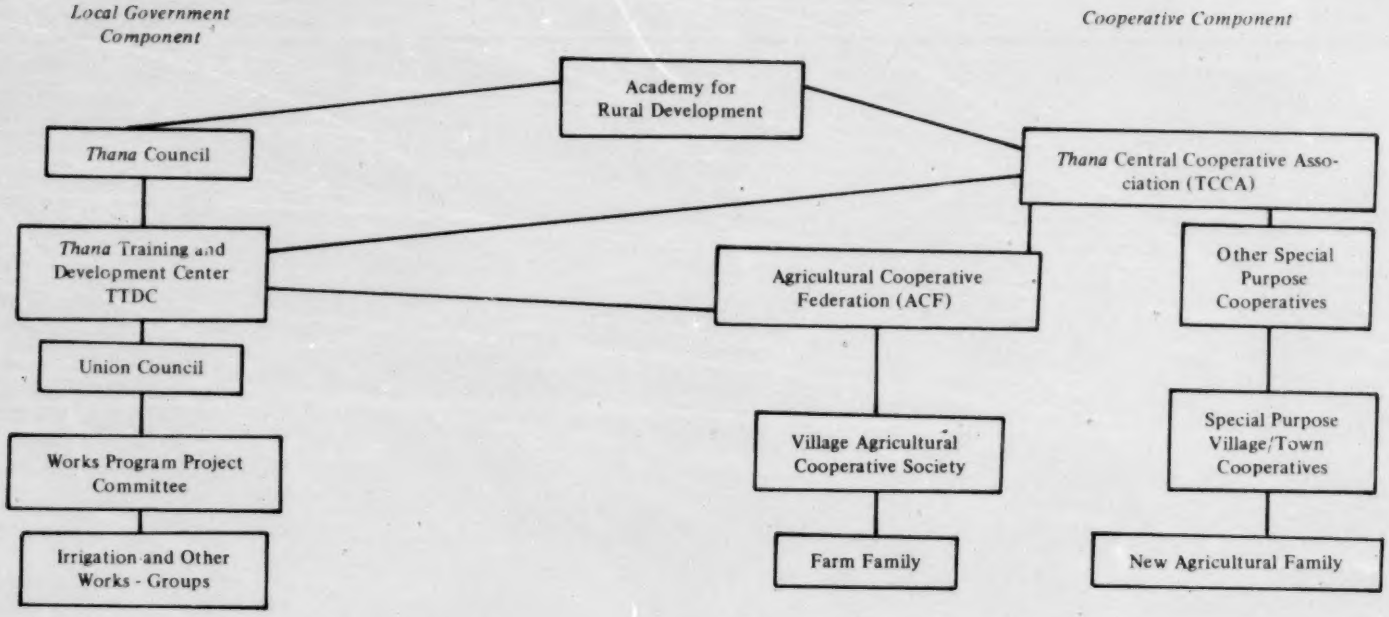

FIGURE 1. Organizational Chart of Comilla Projects

The *thana*-level organization dealing with the agricultural cooperative project is a federation of the village cooperatives. This Agricultural Cooperative Federation (ACF) is managed by a board of directors elected by the village cooperatives. The administration and day-to-day operations of the ACF is carried out by an appointed professional staff headed by a director. There are a number of deputy directors who head various service sections: (1) Banking and Credit, (2) Training and Promotion, (3) Agricultural Extension, (4) Marketing, and (5) Machine Station.

Besides ACF there are several other cooperatives representing special interest groups of employees, transport workers, weavers, potters, processing industry workers, etc. The ACF and those cooperatives are again federated into an apex organization called the *Thana* Central Cooperative Association (TCCA). The managing committee of TCCA is composed of elected representatives of its constituent organizations. The director or a senior member of the faculty of the Academy is elected the chairman of TCCA. This is a convention established by mutual agreement because of the experimental nature of the project and the financial and technical support provided by the Academy.

The faculty members of the Academy study and evaluate the project activities on a continuous basis and advise the project staff, but they are not directly responsible for the management of the project activities.

The village cooperative society functions as an independent organization supported by the ACF and the TCCA. The members accumulate capital through weekly thrift deposits pooled and credited in an account of the cooperative society. Each member maintains the ownership of his capital and can withdraw it under certain conditions. Each member also purchases at least one share-certificate that cannot be withdrawn. The village cooperative promotes the adoption of improved agricultural practices, prepares production plans, receives loans, supplies, and services for distribution among the members. The land is not pooled; each member operates his own farm. However, certain innovations require joint action and management. The cooperative society organizes joint activities and remains responsible for equipment and machines used for those activities. The village cooperative maintains constant links with the ACF through the manager and the model farmer who attend weekly meetings and training classes at the office of the ACF. The members of the

village cooperative meet once a week in their village to discuss plans, review activities, collect savings, receive loans, supplies, knowledge, and information brought back by the manager and the model farmer from the ACF. Similarly, the manager and the model farmer carry savings, and products of the members from the village to the ACF.

The agricultural cooperative federation performs a number of supportive functions. It receives the pooled weekly savings of the village cooperative and deposits the amount in the cooperative's account at a commercial bank. Similarly, it borrows money from TCCA and distributes loans to the village cooperative on the basis of production plans, supervises utilization of the loans, and collects repayments. All accounts involved in these transactions between the village cooperative and the ACF are maintained by the credit section of the ACF.

The ACF organizes weekly management meetings and training classes for the managers and model farmers of the village cooperatives. The training curriculum includes principles and management of cooperatives, accounting, basic agronomy, irrigation, management, marketing, and some non-agricultural topics on education, health, sanitation, family planning, etc. The training program is organized on the basis of a general calendar of agricultural and other activities in the villages. The professional staff of the ACF and the *thana*-level officers of the government departments work together to prepare training materials and conduct meetings and classes. A six-acre farm operated by the ACF is used for demonstrations and practical lessons on improved methods of agriculture.

The agricultural extension section of the ACF provides special services including village visits by the cooperative inspectors and agricultural specialists; demonstration of improved practices in the farmer's field; intensive agricultural extension services in selected villages by a team of Japanese agricultural experts; supply of high yielding varieties of seeds; and the supply of fertilizers, insecticides, and new farm implements. The machine station of the ACF rents out tractors, irrigation pumps, power sprayers, etc. to the village cooperatives for joint use. The marketing section, in collaboration with the cold storage and creamery cooperatives, arranges the joint marketing of certain agricultural products of the cooperative farmers.

The TCCA, as the top body in the pyramind structure, borrows

money from the government cooperative bank and from commercial banks and acts as the financier of the ACF and other members organizations. It also formulates general policies and plans and coordinates the activities of the constituent organizations.

THE RURAL WORKS PROJECT

This is designed to improve the physical infrastructure of roads, bridges, and small irrigation and flood control structures in the villages. The project is implemented by the *thana* council and the union council. At the village level, project committees are formed to prepare schemes and implement them after they are approved by the *thana* council. The union council receives government grants against approved schemes, utilizes the grants according to prescribed procedures, and maintains the accounts. The Academy provides broad guidance, trains the project committee members and government officers responsible for supervision and audit, and conducts evaluation studies (see Figure 1).

An intensive activity under the rural works project is concerned with group adoption and management of small-scale irrigation schemes. Under this project the farmers are organized into groups and given irrigation pumps and tube wells to help irrigated rice and other crops during the dry season when the land is, of necessity, left uncultivated. The group members receive some of the benefits provided under the cooperative project, but they need not form cooperatives immediately. By adopting new and improved practices the groups learn the value of coperation and innovation. At the same time they create the foundation on which cooperatives can be created rapidly. This activity requires less investment than the cooperative project but can produce some immediate results in diffusing innovation and increasing agricultural production.

In implementing the rural works project the committees carry out the following activities: (1) procure and organize laborers and volunteers for the work, (2) call meetings in the village to discuss the proposed work, (3) make proper assessment of the work done, (4) pay the laborers, (5) procure necessary land from the public, (6) maintain proper accounts, (7) complete the work within scheduled time, and (8) publicize the project among the villagers.

THE *THANA* TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT CENTER

This is a new rural development institution that brings together the *thana* offices of the government development agencies and the local government for better planning and coordination of activities. Under this project a new building is constructed to house the *thana* council and the agency offices of agriculture, animal husbandry, education, public health, family planning, etc. The center provides facilities for training workshops, demonstrations, and also limited residential accommodation for the officers. The TTDC creates a new image of development administration symbolized by the police station in the *thana*. The villagers come to the center to attend training and demonstration classes, and to get information and services from the government agencies. They get the services at one place and can easily see the government's efforts at rural development. The ACF and TCCA are the major clients of TTDC (see Figure 1).

In addition to the three projects described above the Academy also organized small projects on women and youth participation in development activities, adult literacy, maternity and child care, and family planning. The institutional arrangment under the three main projects was used in carrying out the activities under those projects.

The Impacts of Academy's Projects

The Academy's pilot projects, together with its research and evaluation studies, made an unprecedented impact on the government's policies and programs of rural development. The models of rural works, irrigation groups, and TTDC were immediately adopted for national programs of rural development. President Ayub Khan visited the Academy in March 1963 and spent a day studying the projects. In a letter to Director Khan he promised full support for "this noble cause." Almost every senior officer concerned with rural development visited the Academy to gather first-hand experience on the project activities. Representatives of foreign agencies and their consultants visited the Academy to get information and advice. The Academy became the center of rural development studies and research in Pakistan.

The adoption of the cooperative model for a national rural development program took place at a slower rate; first in three *thanas* in

different parts of East Pakistan and then in the 20 *thanas* of Comilla district. In 1970 a national program, the Integrated Rural Development Program, was approved under the fourth five-year plan of Pakistan and a special agency was created to implement it.

The Academy did not take any responsibility for the administration of the national programs. Its job was to help the planners in government agencies to train the large numbers of officers and public leaders involved in the programs and to conduct evaluation studies.

The impact of the pilot projects in the cooperative villages of Comilla *thana* was substantial and clearly visible. The cooperatives accumulated a large amount of savings capital and borrowed large sums for investment in agriculture. A very high rate of adoption of improved practices and the irrigated cultivation during the dry season changed the cropping pattern and doubled the production of rice in the *thana*. The transportation and marketing facilities also improved greatly. A survey conducted by the Academy showed that during the period 1963-1970 the per capita gross income (at 1976 prices) of the cooperative farmer increased at an average annual rate of 22 percent compared to a rate of increase of 13 percent in a neighboring *thana* that had no cooperatives.

The Academy and its projects suffered damages during the war of Bangladesh liberation in 1971. Its most serious loss was in leadership—A.H. Khan left Comilla and went to West Pakistan. However, the Academy's training and project activities continue to support the rural development programs of the government of Bangladesh. The first five-year plan of Bangladesh has allocated substantial funds for continued and expanded activities by the Academy. The rural works, irrigation groups, and IRDP programs have been retained in the Bangladesh plan of rural development.

Problems and Repercussions

The Academy's projects in Comilla *thana* faced many problems and unanticipated consequences. A brief discussion of the major problems is in order.

The Academy hoped that as the projects developed the scope of participation by the rural people would widen and ultimately the entire village community would become involved in rural development. Then the cooperatives and union councils would fulfill the long felt needs of

strong rural development institutions in the villages. In practice this expectation was only partially realized.

A major problem was the factional politics in the villages, perpetuated by the power struggle between such members of the rural elite as large land owners, money lenders, traders, contractors, and lawyers. Many of the elites were linked to economic and political interest groups in the urban areas. Some of them found in rural development activities a means for gaining personal financial and political benefits. They showed enthusiasm and took initiative in capturing leadership positions in some cooperatives and union councils. This resulted in misuse and misappropriation of funds, default in repayment of cooperative loans, favoritism, mismanagement, and rivalries within the cooperatives and union councils. When the Academy tried to curb their influence they responded with political maneuvering and agitation. The Academy was not capable of undertaking a political battle; its projects had no political base. Ironically, the governor of East Pakistan, a trusted lieutenant of president Ayub Khan, turned against the Academy's program as he considered it a threat to his own political ambitions.

Secondly, the cooperative project failed to meet the urgent needs of the growing class of landless laborers. This group was only partially benefitted by the rural works and agricultural cooperative projects. The Academy was aware of the problem but failed to design special projects for them.

Finally, the Academy's projects on social development (education, public health, women and youth activities, etc.) received little support from the government. Internally, the Academy also put less emphasis on those activities. As a result the poorer and more depressed section of the rural population in Comilla benefitted much less than the landowning class.

5

COMMUNICATION IN THE COMILLA PROJECT

The Academy's pilot projects in Comilla provide a good case history of micro-level processes of communication in rural development. Note that the mass media played a *minor* role in the Comilla projects. In 1960 a preliminary study was made by the Academy to determine if the establishment of a radio station for promotional and extension work in Comilla would be desirable. Although the idea was attractive, the more practical problems of legal requirements, finance, programming, and efficiency weighed against such a venture at such an early stage of the projects. Instead, the Academy chose to concentrate on institutionalizing certain interpersonal channels of communication already built into the structure of the cooperative project. Therefore, our study will focus on the cooperative project and examine how the communication processes developed along with the project activities.

Communication activities in the project area correspond roughly to the stages of development of the cooperative project. We have identified four types of communication that correspond to the four stages of development: (1) preparatory, (2) organizational, (3) operational, and (4) evaluation. We may also view the major communication events as the transmission of messages among these key groups of people: (1) the Director and faculty members of the Academy (the top decision-makers of the rural development project in Comilla); (2) the project field-staff (implementers of decisions relating to the project); (3) the village leaders (key participants and decision-makers at the village level); and (4) the general members of village communities (participants in the project and decision-makers at the family level). Using these categories we can describe the dominant patterns of communication in Comilla as shown in Figure 1. The communication categories (I-IV) in the figure represent the dominant patterns at different stages of the project. Because of the dynamic nature of the Comilla project, all types of communication were

present with greater or lesser intensity at all of the stages. The classification is based on the dominant type of communication for each stage. Obviously, the stages are not mutually exclusive; there is some overlap between them.

The Preparatory Stage

This was the beginning of communication between the Academy and the villages of Comilla *thana*. Starting in May 1959 the Director and the members of the Academy's faculty visited the villages for a period of about three months. They went individually and in groups to many villages, met groups of villagers, asked questions, and listened attentively to the villagers' description of their needs and problems. Instead of suggesting solutions to the problems the faculty encouraged the villagers to think about their problems and to suggest possible solutions. Information gathering was characteristic of the communication process here and the flow of communication was primarily from the villagers to the staff of the Academy. Communication took place in informal village settings; the visits were unannounced and the villagers had no opportunity to organize themselves to receive "important officials" from the city. The dialogue in the villages was not restricted to the Academy staff and the village leaders. The poorest members of the village population were drawn into the discussion and sometimes individual families were visited separately to avoid any prompting or interruption from the leaders and influential villagers.

The village visits were followed by a series of informal "camps and conferences" organized on the grounds of the Academy in Comilla City. Different groups of villagers were invited separately to attend the camps and conferences, which lasted only a few days. Among the groups were members of the union council, chairmen of existing multipurpose cooperative societies, leading farmers, village doctors, artisans, poets, and musicians. The Academy staff and the village participants met to discuss the problems of rural development. The village participants were encouraged to analyze the problems and offer practical solutions.

A number of research surveys and studies were conducted during this preparatory stage of the project. One of the studies examined how the impersonal and personal communication network that carried the development messages, and looked at its relationship to the adoption of

Communication Category/Stage	*Dominant Nature of Communication Flow*	*Dominant Message Characteristics*	*Major Consequences*
Preparatory	A ⟷ C & D	Informational; Problems and prospects of rural development	Assessment of situation
			Establishment of rapport
Organizational	A ⟷ C & D	Ideological; Value-oriented	Motivation
		Persuasive	Mobilization
Operational	A → B → C → D* A ← B ← C ← D	Informational; Work-oriented	Individual and group adoption and management of innovations
Evaluative	B & A ⟷ D & C*	Evaluative; Problem-oriented	Confrontations with problems

A - Top decision makers—Academy Director and faculty members
B - Project field staff
C - Village leaders, village cooperative officials
D - General members of village cooperative and community

*Relatively structured formal communication situation

FIGURE 2. Communication Patterns in Comilla Project

innovations by the farmers (Rahim, 1961). Another study examined the patterns of opinion leadership and personal influence in a village of Comilla *thana* (Rahim, 1965). Other studies examined the factors that were related to diffusion and the adoption of innovations in the villages.

The communication activities at the preparatory stage were highly effective in creating in the villagers a sense of urgency and a favorable image of the Academy. Many villagers thought that the Academy was different from other government offices. The officers of the Academy listened to the villagers and treated them with respect. They did not just give orders and advice. They were interested in helping the villagers to improve their economic conditions. On the other hand, the Academy staff found the village visits rewarding. They learned much about the complex nature of rural problems and the villagers' attitudes toward those problems. Moreover, getting to know the facts of village life was refreshing to the academicians who normally deal with abstract categories, concepts, and ideas.

The Organizational Stage

By the end of 1960 the Academy was ready to begin organizational activities in the villages of Comilla. The blueprint for a pilot project on rural development had already been prepared. The task now was to persuade the villagers to accept some new ideas and to organize village cooperatives voluntarily.

The Academy staff, led by Dr. Khan, started intensive village visits. A fieldworker was sent ahead to prepare village meetings so they would be well-attended. Attention was focused on a selected number of villages where the problems were acute, the prospect of immediate improvement in agriculture was good, and some leaders in the village were receptive to new ideas. The Academy staff went to the villages to transmit a definite set of messages aimed at persuading the villagers and setting them in action.

The most important communicator at this stage was Director Khan, the living spirit behind the Comilla project. Khan is not a Bengali, but he had worked in Bengal for many years, first as a young officer of the Indian Civil Service, and later as a teacher and rural development worker. His knowledge of Bengali literature was limited, but he managed to make strongly persuasive speeches in Bengali to the rural audience.

As a civil service probationer (intern) Khan had been trained in Cambridge, and later he attended a famous Islamic theology institution in India. He learned the Western and Islamic arts of rhetoric. He was an expert in mixing secular and religious themes, and authoritative and persuasive tones in his speeches. His unsophisticated Bengali mixed with Arabic, Persian, and Urdu were very attractive to the village audience. Sometimes during his speeches he would stumble and struggle for the right Bengali word. He would ask the audience for help and someone would call out the right word. His unassuming attitude thus helped to create a participatory communication situation.

Khan's speeches before the village audiences emphasized the ideology and basic principles of rural development, and they always contained some moral undertone. The principles were stated clearly; the specific actions to implement the principles were outlined. The following excerpts from his speeches will illustrate.

> During the past hundred years, in many countries, the peasants and laborers have improved their condition by uniting themselves. So we are also thinking of what we should do for our country. In what way will the poor peasants and laborers protect themselves?
>
> Nothing will happen if you shout, beg or strike. There will be no change until you unite all your strength and work according to a definite principle and technique.
>
> Two things are important in this world. One is your labor, the strength of your body and the strength of your hands. The other is the strength of capital and money. As long as these two forces are separated the laborers who are working will not get their share. When you are able to get the strength of capital and put these two forces together there will be no more misery. If the strength of capital and labor remain separated, then the fruit of labor will be taken away by those who have the capital.
>
> The Prophet said "People who are very poor and do not have enough in this life may become *Kafir* (unbeliever)." When men become very poor and don't have enough wealth they lose their strength of mind. Moulana Rumi (a Persian theologian and poet) said, "Even when a tiger gets hungry he becomes weak like a fox." Therefore, if our people's worldly state is not good, our nation cannot have a religion.
>
> We have to give our women their freedom. Because at this stage we are going the way of destruction. Our country is not prospering. If the women of a country are kept in the house, if they are not allowed to work, how can that country prosper? So it is necessary for us to let our women come out of

Purdah and start working in every field.

If you are hoping for your situation to be improved by the efforts of outsiders, you are mistaken. That will not happen. You must make the efforts yourselves. Those of you who are Muslims can read in the Qur'an that Allah says: "Allah does not better the condition of any nation until the nation makes the change in its heart." That is if there is envy, lack of faith, factionalism in men's hearts, then you will see that their condition will not improve.

What is going on in the villages now? Some people have become rich. How? They give a 10 *rupee* loan and take two *maunds* of rice as interest. I went to one place. I asked a rich man: "I see that you have lots of land; why don't you make a garden?" He answered: "How can I make a garden? The thieves don't leave anything. They take the coconuts from my trees; they steal the fish from my pond." He has gotten rich but he is plagued by fear, the poor people are plagued by envy. So I say: As long as this kind of situation remains, where each man is alone and is concerned only for himself and envies his neighbor, everyone will perish. But if you all unite, join together, have a meeting every week and concern yourselves with the problem of how to better your situation together, you will see that everyone's situation will improve.

The Principle of a cooperative society is: "All work for each and each works for all." If you work this way you will see how much *barkat* will come. *Barkat* is the mercy of Allah—making a little thing big. This is the fruit of united effort.

What is your own effort? I will tell you again. First of all you have to save money. You must take some trouble -even if you don't eat, you must save money. If you don't make your own capital this whole (cooperative) society will vanish like a mist. Not a trace will remain. Money is the basis of all this work. And all this money will come from your hands.

Remember, our old methods of farming are now outdated. We can't use the same method we used 100 years ago. The reason is that then the population was very small. The land was more fertile. They used to get 15 *maunds* of paddy from one *bigha* of land. But now the population is so large that you have to get 30 *maunds* out of land which used to yield only 15. If you don't, people will die of starvation. If you want to produce more you must learn new methods. Another aim of the cooperative society is for you to learn these modern methods and work according to them. If you don't your income will not increase. If your income does not increase how can you make deposits? And, if you don't make deposits where will your capital come from? No more capital will be brought from America.

In the village meetings Khan and his associates explained the basic principles of capital formation, innovation, and cooperation. They

stressed the need for change of the economic, technical, and social processes of agricultural production. They urged the village leaders to consider seriously the new ideas and discuss them with all the members of the community. The leaders were invited to visit the Academy for further discussion and the fieldworkers were instructed to follow up the village meetings and help the villagers in making a joint decision to form a cooperative society.

The organizational communication activities initiated by the Academy were concentrated at first in five selected villages. Those villages were in a desperate economic condition due to successive damage of crops by flood. The villages were situated in low lying areas that made the crop land vulnerable to floods. But with proper planning and management the villagers could grow a different variety of rice that is grown in low land during the dry winter months. The area planted in this crop could be increased greatly with the addition of mechanical irrigation. The problem was one of organizing the joint activities for building embankments and small dams, for digging the canals for storage of monsoon water, and operating mechanical pumps for taking water to the fields. None of these could be done individually because of the small size and poor economic condition of the farms. Many villagers already knew about the mechanical pumps. They had seen commercial contractors using those expensive machines on building and construction sites that required pumping water from ponds and ditches. They had no idea how they could use such machines effectively and profitably for cultivation purposes. Knowing that a technology existed did not create sufficient interest among the villagers for them to seek its social application in a concrete situation. It was necessary for the Academy staff to explain and demonstrate how a technology could be "harnessed": organizing village cooperatives for joint action within the village and setting up supportive linkages with outside organizations were offered as first steps. The Academy's main task was to show how and what institutional changes must accompany any technical change. This was the main theme of the communication efforts at the organizational stage of the Comilla project.

The communication on the rural development principles and practices by the Academy staff triggered intensive debate and discussion among various groups of people within the village. Some people sought information and advice from their friends and relatives in other

villages; others came to the Academy and asked the fieldworkers to visit their village more frequently to answer questions raised by the people.

Several weeks passed before some people (a group of the more active villagers) decided to try the ideas presented by the Academy. They formed a cooperative society in their village and elected a manager to keep regular contacts with the Academy. Following their example, a number of other villages in the surrounding area began to organize themselves into cooperatives. Soon twenty village cooperatives were organized in Comilla *thana.*

With those twenty villages a central cooperative association was formed at the Academy to support the village cooperative societies. The basic structure of the project was now established and the project could advance to the stage of operation.

The Academy continued its promotional activities in other villages and some of the leaders of the first twenty villages joined them in that work. People from the other villages nearby began to visit the cooperative villages to see and learn how a cooperative is organized and how it could help the villagers.

The Operational Stage

In January 1962, the central cooperative association of Comilla *thana* was officially registered as a cooperative society. Khan was elected the first chairman of the managing committee which consisted of six members of the faculty of the Academy and two elected representatives of the village cooperative societies. Later on, as the number of village cooperatives increased, village representatives were added to replace the nominated faculty members on the managing committee. The TCCA recruited its own administrative and field staff. Different activities were organized through different sections of the TCCA. As the formal structure developed the formal channels of communication began to operate and gradually to supplement the informal communication. The formal communication structure of the Comilla project is shown in Figure 2.

The faculty council of the Academy met once every week. The meeting was attended by the senior officials of TCCA. About half of the meeting time was spent in discussing matters relating to the Comilla project. The focus of the discussions was on review of activities, analysis

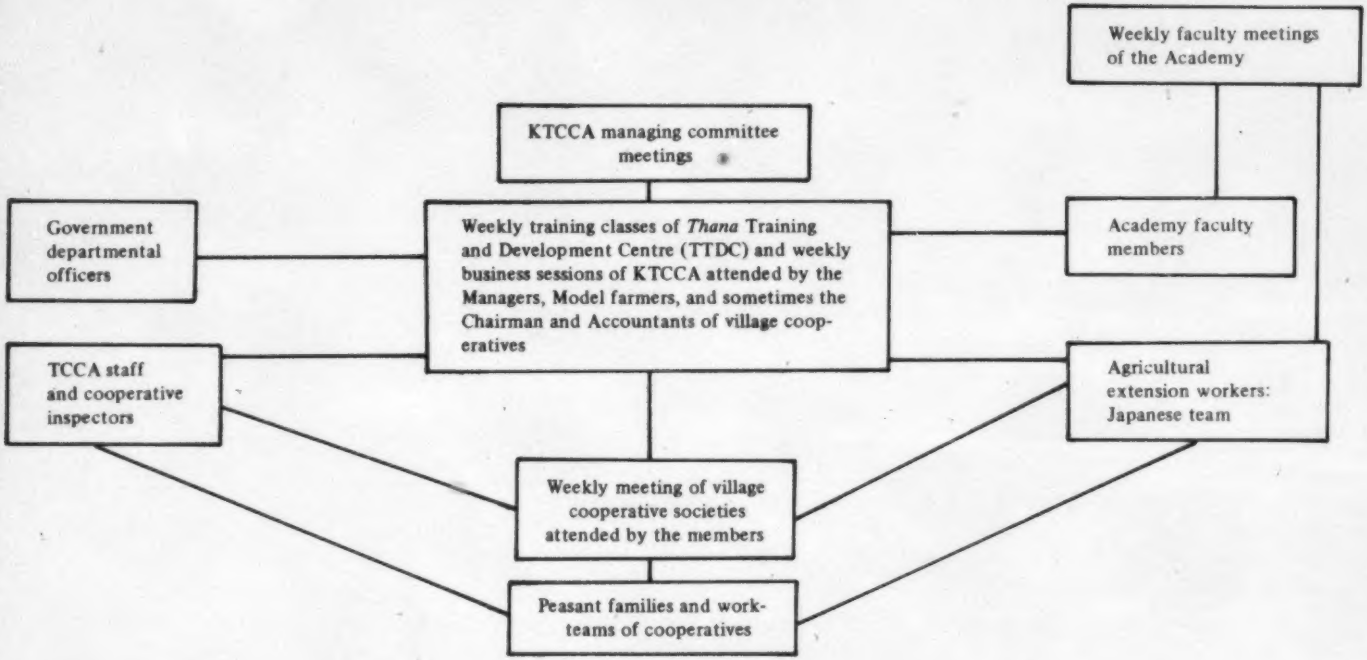
Weekly faculty meetings of the Academy
KTCCA managing committee meetings
Government departmental officers
Weekly training classes of *Thana* Training and Development Centre (TTDC) and weekly business sessions of KTCCA attended by the Managers, Model farmers, and sometimes the Chairman and Accountants of village cooperatives
Academy faculty members
TCCA staff and cooperative inspectors
Agricultural extension workers: Japanese team
Weekly meeting of village cooperative societies attended by the members
Peasant families and work-teams of cooperatives

FIGURE 3. Formal Communication Structure of Comilla Project

of problems faced in the field, and formulation of policies and strategies. The faculty meeting was also an avenue for the exchange of knowledge and information between Academy researchers and TCCA practitioners.

The TCCA managing committee met regularly to discuss and make decisions on business matters. Common membership between the managing committee and the faculty council facilitated communication. Ideas that had originated and been approved in the faculty council were frequently adopted in the TCCA meeting. Khan provided highly effective leadership as the director of the Academy and the chairman of the TCCA. He generated a sense of consensus by ensuring wide participation of key persons in the decision-making processes.

In Comilla, the ACF,TCCA, and TTDC were located in the same campus—the *Avoy Ashram.* This was an active center where hundreds of villagers came every week to attend business meetings and training classes. The TCCA and ACF organized cooperative business meetings and the TTDC organized training classes. The main participants were the managers, model farmers, and occasionally, the chairmen and accountants of the village cooperative societies. The *Avoy Ashram* was the main center of communication between the project officials (the change agents) and the representatives of the village cooperatives (the client population).

The basic idea behind the communication and educational activities at *Avoy Ashram* was that the meetings and discussions in a disciplined situation would not only facilitate two-way communication but would also contribute to behavioral change. Ideas and information would flow from the experts to the villagers in a continuous manner and immediate feedback would occur. The group discussions would help to create consensus. The village leaders would become effective local communicators; they would go back to the village every week and transmit the ideas and information to other members in village meetings and personal conversations. Similarly, the leaders would carry back ideas and information to the experts at the *Avoy Ashram.* The contents of the communication would always relate to the current or proposed development activities.

Each village representative, particularly the manager of the village cooperative, came to *Avoy Ashram* on a fixed day every week. He spent the day attending classes and meetings, and performing the business of the village: depositing the weekly savings of the members at the bank; and processing applications for loans, supplies, and services. The project office paid him a small allowance to cover travelling expenses.

The training classes and business meetings were arranged according to the crop calendar or other production activities in the village. The *thana*-level officers of the departments of agriculture, animal husbandry, fishery, forestry, irrigation, public health, family planning, and education gave lectures and seminars on their topics. The cooperative inspectors of the TCCA explained the principles of cooperative management, record-keeping, and accounting. The faculty members of the Academy attended some of the sessions as guest speakers. The Japanese team and other extension experts explained improved practices of agriculture an demonstrated those methods in the five-acre demonstration farm of the *Avoy Ashram.* They also organized field demonstrations at a selected number of farms in the village.

It was a basic principle of the Comilla project that the village cooperative should meet at the village once a week to make savings deposits, acquire knowledge and information from the representatives who had attended classes at the *Avoy Ashram,* and plan and discuss the activities of the cooperative. Each cooperative was required to prepare seasonal production plans. In the village meeting each member of the cooperative indicated his plan of growing crops during the next season and his requirements of credit and other inputs. When these plans were discussed in the village meeting the manager, model farmer, and sometimes the cooperative inspector from the *Avoy Ashram,* advised the farmers about adoption of an improved practice to get higher crop yields. The individual plans were then consolidated into a production plan for the cooperative society and submitted to the agricultural cooperative federation. The production plan thus became a basis for transaction of information and material resources between the village cooperative and the ACF. The weekly meeting promoted information sharing and collective decision making.

The weekly meeting was convened by the manager and presided over by the chairman of the cooperative. Someone's parlor was designated as the meeting place and the members assembled there. In a few cases, the cooperative was able to build an office that was used as the regular meeting place. The meeting was conducted informally and often resembled the traditional village assembly where disputes were settled. Sometimes non-members attended the meeting and various matters not related to the cooperative were discussed. In some cases, the meeting began as a traditional village assembly to discuss certain village

affairs and to settle disputes. After the village matters had been dealt with, the cooperative meeting was held. Usually 75 percent of the total membership of the cooperative attended. However, the attendance deteriorated over time, especially in the weaker cooperatives.

The deliberations in the cooperative village meeting often focussed on a central theme: What are the activities recommended by the TCCA and ACF? Are these useful? Can we accept the recommended innovations? What will be the costs? How shall we benefit? What kind and how much financial, material, and technical assistance will be available at what costs? How will the assistance be distributed among the members? What kinds of joint actions will be required and how will it be organized and managed? Clearly, dependence on TCCA was an important psychological factor that influenced communication and member participation in the village meeting. The cooperative members were less inclined to communicate about things they could do individually or jointly without the assistance of TCCA or ACF. The village meeting was frequently used by the leaders to generate group pressure on defaulting members who had failed to make deposits, repay loans, or make proper use of resources obtained from TCCA. But this technique of group pressure was applied selectively, on the matters relating to the cooperative society. Except in a few special cases it did not become a general tool of regulation of the village life.

Communication with the village was not limited only to training classes and meetings. The officers of TCCA and ACF made direct contacts with individual farmers and village leaders. The Academy researchers interviewed many villagers during their research and survey activities. The research section of the Academy had twenty part-time "village enumerators" who were additional channels of communication. A considerable amount of statistical information on the crops and the uses of improved practices was regularly enumerated. They also carried back to the village information about the activities of the Academy. Thus, the villagers had a number of alternative interpersonal sources of information about the Academy and its project. The TCCA published a weekly news and information magazine that was distributed to the cooperatives. Educational films were shown to the village audience. The Academy organized a team of local poets and musicians who gave performances in the village markets. Their songs were composed on development themes, and particularly on population problems and family

planning. In addition, the Academy and the TCCA jointly organized annual fairs and festivals that were attended by large numbers of villagers.

The communication during the operational stage of the Comilla project was primarily directed at specific activities such as thrift savings; supervised credit; small-scale irrigation; tractor cultivation; improved intercultural practices in rice and vegetable cultivation; plant protection; processing and marketing of rice, sugarcane, vegetables, and dairy products; poultry raising; child and maternity care; family planning; home sanitation; youth and women's activities; functional and adult literacy, etc. Some idea about scope and coverage of communication can be obtained from the following facts about the Comilla project.

> In 1968 the project had an enrollment of 15,000 members in 339 village cooperative societies. The members' accumulated capital in savings and shares was about US $250,000. About two million dollars was issued to the cooperative as short-term loans at the beginning of the project; 60 percent had already been repaid. The cooperatives were operating 128 irrigation pumps and wells that covered a cultivated area of about 4,000 acres, most of which was under improved methods of cultivation and high-yielding varieties of rice. About 700 managers and model farmers of the village cooperatives were regularly attending meetings and training classes at TCCA and ACF, and more than 10,000 cooperative members were attending the weekly village meetings. In addition, many village women, school students, and adult education teachers attended weekly classes at the *Avoy Ashram.* More than 50 field officials of TCCA and ACF regularly visited the village cooperative. In total, about 12,000 persons from 30,000 farm families in Comilla *thana* were linked to the interpersonal channels of communication created by the project activities. Many more people were indirectly linked to the communication channels through the members of the cooperatives.

The interpersonal communication network built into the structure of the Comilla project was an effective means of communication. Through it a continuous and rapid transmission of messages between

the project office and the village cooperatives took place. Communication between village cooperatives was also facilitated because the village leaders met weekly at the *Avoy Ashram*. The efficacy of the network was evident in the rapid diffusion of agricultural innovations that took place in Comilla *thana*.

However, the communication system had some serious weaknesses that became evident as the project encompassed more villages and its activities became more complex. The effectiveness of communication was dependent on two things: (1) the credibility of the project officials and the quality of the messages relayed by them to the meetings and classes; (2) the interest, ability, and integrity of the managers and model farmers who played the role of mediator between the project officials and the village people.

Initially, the faculty members of the Academy and the senior officials of TCCA regularly attended the weekly meetings and visited the villages. But as the project expanded and its operations became routinized most of the communication activities that related to operations were left to the junior officials who had limited decision-making power. This created a gap between information and decision. With the increasing adoption of innovations the villagers faced complex technical and organizational problems. The junior officials could not offer information and advice for the solution of those problems. They referred the questions to the senior officials who in turn sought advice from experts from outside the project. There was no effective mechanism available for seeking solutions to the complex problems because the technical and research organizations within the country did not have the capability of supporting an innovative project like Comilla. The Academy tried to develop such a capability within the institution by organizing some technical research and inviting advisors from abroad, but it could do very little because of organizational and resource constraints.

Consequently, the nature and quality of the information that was relayed by the project officials failed to change, improve, and keep pace with the progress of activities in the villages. The leaders of the more progressive cooperative lost interest in the weekly meetings at the *Avoy Ashram* because their information needs were not satisfied, and some cooperatives with special problems found the *Avoy Ashram's* messages irrelevant to their particular problems.

The managers and model farmers occupied crucial positions as

mediators in the communication network. They derived economic benefits from the travelling allowance and other financial incentives provided by the project. Regular contact with the project officials enhanced their importance and social prestige in the village. Their ability to communicate the village needs to the project office and procure information, supplies, and services for the village made them influential. Some of them exploited the situation to derive personal and factional benefits. In some cases, the traditional leadership positions in the village were threatened by the increasing power of the cooperative's manager or model farmer. The communication inputs influenced the local politics and power structure of the village. The managers and model farmers got involved in the process of political change. But the Academy's project could not provide guidance and support to them. The Academy maintained a position of political neutrality that sometimes compelled the village leaders to seek assistance elsewhere. In the final analysis, the village cooperative could not always maintain the principle of political neutrality advocated by the Academy.

The Evaluation Stage

The communication network built into the structure of the Comilla project ensured regular feedback from the team of managers and model farmers who attended the weekly meetings. The village visits made by the faculty members of the Academy and the officials of TCCA and ACF also provided a significant amount of feedback. Initially, these channels provided adequate information from the villages for the evaluation of progress and for taking necessary corrective measures in solving problems faced by the project. However, as the project expanded it was noticed that the feedback was best in those villages where the cooperative was strong, leadership was dynamic, and the performance was effective. Those villages attracted more visits and supervision from the project office, and the village leaders had more access to the top project officials; in turn, the Academy and project officials sought more information and advice from those villages, and the villages voluntarily furnished information about their experiences, knowledge, and attitudes.

The Academy researchers became aware of the problem of imbalance in communication. They investigated and discussed the problem. They learned that in some cases the managers, model farmers, and ACF

inspectors were selectively transmitting information between the village and the project. They omitted the problems and difficulties faced by the majority of the members of the cooperative society. Moreover, they often served the interests of a small number of influential members rather than those of the total membership of the cooperative society.

The problem of communication was associated strongly with the level of performance of the cooperative. The level of performance was low in those instances where: the manager lost the confidence of the members because he had misused or misappropriated the cooperative's funds; the members belonged to one or more rival factions in the village; the leadership was autocratic; and the cooperative was managed by a small coterie of persons interested in money lending, land renting, and trading, rather than in better farming. These factors were directly responsible for poor communication.

In the high performance cooperatives these conditions were either absent or less severe. Moreover, the weekly meetings were held regularly and attendance was high. The manager kept the members informed about their savings and loans and other financial transactions of the cooperative. The important decisions were made in open general meetings of the village cooperative (Hussain, 1967).

In order to improve feedback and to make a better assessment of the problems in the field the Academy strengthened its research by conducting regular sample surveys on the opinions and attitudes of the villagers. In addition, the Academy organized an annual conference of the village cooperatives. A selected number of cooperative chairmen, managers, model farmers, ordinary members, and non-members from randomly chosen cooperative villages were invited to the conference held at the Academy. The participants, along with the Academy and project staff, discussed a wide range of problems. The village participants were encouraged to talk frankly and look critically at their problems and experiences. The result was encouraging.

The ordinary members of cooperatives were quite outspoken in criticizing the mistakes and poor performances of their leaders and the project staff. Some of the leaders were defensive, but others pointed out that the members were not carrying out their roles as actively as was necessary to make cooperation effective. The non-members explained why they could not or would not join the cooperative. The village cooperative participants also expressed concern about the growing bureaucratic

trends in the project office. They appreciated the opportunity, made possible by the conference, for direct communication with the decision makers.

The evaluative communication was highly productive. The Academy and the project staff got insights into the real problems, some of which were created by their own activities and the structural constraints in the project. On the other hand, many villagers who normally would not communicate their views and ideas through the established organizational channels were able to do so in the research interviews and conference discussions. This reinforced their trust and confidence in the project. The leaders of the cooperative became more conscious of their duties and responsibilities as a result of the public criticism leveled in the conference.

6

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

In sharing his experience of communication in rural development Akhter Hameed Khan noted in a recent paper, "It was indeed a complex process. It did not begin and end, as some experts imply, with the villagers. Our rural development, like the holy Ganges, originated in the heights and wound its tedious way through many political and bureaucratic jungles" (Khan, 1975). He then described how the communication activities in Comilla project involved several groups of people inside and outside Comilla. The review presented in this case study also reflects the complex nature of rural development communication in Bangladesh, and the way it is shaped by cultural, political, and organizational factors.

The historical process of social change and development in Bengal was influenced by two main factors. First of all, new religious ideas, particularly *Sufism*, created a deep-rooted belief among the rural people in the primacy of spiritual enlightenment over material development. Poverty was not considered evil; sometimes it was even glorified in the name of simple living, and relief from the physical pains of poverty was sought in ecstatic pursuit of *spiritual* goals.

Secondly, the Bengali people lost their independence at a time when the world was entering the era of science and technology. The loss of independence was a fatal blow to the morale of the Bengali people and their leaders, and in utter frustration the leaders turned backward and sought relief in religious dogmatism. They failed to see the significance of revolutionary change in the new world.

The V-AID and Basic Democracies programs illustrate how the post-British leaders at the national government level tried to establish new institutions for rural development. They were able to mobilize the bureaucracy for widespread activities in the rural areas, but the programs failed to take root and grow. They were plagued by overcentralization and a lack of emphasis on strengthening the organizations, participation, and

decision making at the local level. The education-communication component of those two programs was weak and unrelated to local needs and aspirations.

The rural development pilot project, Comilla, illustrates how an effective interpersonal communication network can be built into the structure of a rural development project. In the case of Comilla it was possible to make effective use of the existing communication resources. Field research pointed out the opinion leaders in the villages. Most of the top opinion leaders were able to maintain communication links between the village and the urban centers of information (Rahim, 1961, 1965). It was also known that people traditionally assemble in the villages to discuss village affairs, settle disputes, and organize collective activities. Thus, the organizational structure of the Comilla project was built on these traditional communication structures.

The flow of development communication in Comilla began at the bottom. The Academy created opportunities for the village people to express their views, opinions, and concerns. The experts from the Academy established face-to-face contacts with the village people which established the Academy's legitimacy in the eyes of the rural people, and facilitated cooperative decision making and planning of activities.

The effective communication of innovations in Comilla was due to two main factors. First, the communication inputs were related to the flow of physical inputs. Attempts were made to keep the messages relevant to the practical activities that could be undertaken by the villagers. The communication of any innovations that had not been tested locally and for which the physical supplies and services had not been arranged, was avoided. This practice helped to maintain a low expectation profile and to avoid frustrations.

Secondly, the staff of the Academy and KTCCA were induced to adopt the same innovations that they recommended to the villagers. The staff organized Employees' Cooperatives and joined the KTCCA. The land and the ponds in the Academy's campus were cultivated to grow crops to raise poultry and fish. Improved technical methods were used in all these activities.

The Academy learned that regular communication with a majority of the members of the village cooperatives was essential to overcome the communication constraints of development bureaucracy and to maintain the dynamism of a project. This could not be fully achieved by depending

on the two-step structure of communication through the mediators—the managers and the model farmers. Direct communication would be necessary for a wider sharing of the ideology and principles of rural development and for the free exchange of information and experiences among various classes of participants in the development activities.

The interpersonal network of communication in Comilla was adequate to carry information into the villages and transmit feedback only so long as the scope and coverage of the project were limited. But with the expansion of the project the interpersonal system was overloaded. The capacity of the system could not be increased within the inherent constraints of its structure. The Academy failed to develop a mass media support system that could reduce the load on the interpersonal channels and minimize the distortion and loss of information that was transmitted by the managers and model farmers. This proved to be a serious weakness of the communication system in Comilla. When the government began setting up Comilla-type projects all over the country the need for a communication model that would link mass media to interpersonal channels was obvious. But the Academy could not make any practical recommendation in that regard. The Academy's inability to develop a mass media link with interpersonal channels was partly attributed to resource constraints. Then too, there was some apprehension that a mass media system might adversely effect interaction in the village meeting, arouse undesirable expectation, and distract the attention of the village participants from more practical activities.

The communication of rural development ideology was an important factor in the Academy's effort to mobilize the rural people. In this regard, the Academy was fortunate to have a highly credible source, Akhter Hameed Khan. His speeches were powerful because their content interrelated the traditional with modern values and attitudes, and his method of delivery was appealing to the villagers. Khan performed the persuasive and exhortative roles usually reserved for the political leaders.

The Academy did not make any special effort to enlist support for the promotional and mobilization tasks from the political and religious organizations. As a research and educational institution the Academy tried to maintain a neutral position. This was not difficult at the beginning, but as the project began to make an impact in the rural area the political and religious organizations became interested and tried to influence it. The national press began covering the events of Comilla.

Some political leaders wanted to use the Academy to enlarge their sphere of personal influence in the rural area. The Academy resisted those attempts. One faction of the ruling party, led by the provincial governor, became antagonistic toward the Comilla project. The local leaders of that party faction made several attempts to discredit the Academy by organizing agitations and protests against the project activities in Comilla. On the other hand, some leaders of the opposition political parties criticized the project as a show-piece of the dictatorial regime of Ayub Khan. Lack of political support was no doubt a factor that inhibited a faster growth and development of the rural development movement demonstrated by the Comilla project.

However, the Comilla project was not isolated from the professional activities related to rural development policy and planning at the national and international level. A large number of visitors, decision makers, and experts from different national and international agencies, came to Comilla to discuss development problems and to seek information and advice from Khan and his associates. The Academy was frequently asked by the government to help in policy formulation and planning and to prepare position papers on rural development problems. A large number of officers from different government departments attended training seminars and workshops in the Academy. The Academy's library, research documentation, and the pilot projects attracted a large number of scholars and specialists who were interested in rural development and social change.

The Comilla project, through the Academy, was in fact linked to the national and international network of communication on rural development. The villages of Comilla *thana* received many visitors from different countries, and through them, were exposed to different cultures and experiences. The intensive fieldwork by American Peace Corps Volunteers and Japanese agricultural experts was particularly significant in that regard.

It is clear that development communication is not merely a matter of transmitting information about how things can be done better by the village people, or how agricultural production can be increased by adopting technological innovations, or how the family size can be limited by using contraception. Communication is more than the exchange of problem-solving information. As Professor Daniel Lerner showed in his Middle East study - communication plays a crucial role in the societal

transition from the traditional to modern participatory style of life. Mass communication multiples the psychic mobility or empathy, which is a basic element of modernity (Lerner, 1958). At different stages of national development and change, communication performs various functions—"teaching nation-ness, raising aspirations, teaching new skills, encouraging the participation. . . . " (Schramm, 1967)

Communication has the broader function of helping people to restructure their mental framework in interpreting specific events and phenomena, and to relate to the broader world beyond their village. This probably is more important than the transmission of information because it creates the conditions for a qualitative change in the life style and it also provides a basis for internalization of technical change and innovation. Rural people, like any other people, like to hear about ideas and principles that justify taking action in a concrete situation. They do not like theory and practice to be separated. In the past, religion gave them a framework on which they could depend safely. But now that framework has become weak and out-of-date and they no longer can use it effectively to explain events around them. So they look for ideas and principles at the same time as they seek information of a technical nature.

The communication processes in rural development are interwoven with other socio-political processes. Rural development activities require the rural people and the people in the government, business, and urban sectors to establish new social relations with each other. New communication processes facilitate the growth and development of those relationships. Both mass media and interpersonal communication are necessary to establish and maintain those relationships, but the nature and the effectiveness of the communication processes are determined by the institutional and organizational innovations that take place in the society. Communication is only as good as those other changes.

The information function of communication in rural development is more complex than its conceptualization in the communication models of innovation diffusion research. The *knowledge-persuasion-decision-confirmation* model (Rogers, 1971) fails to emphasize an important point. In addition to knowing about the technical nature of innovations, how they work and with what effects, the potential adopters as social groups need to understand how these innovations fit into the real social situation in which the groups operate. Communication about the

interface of the technical and social aspects of new ideas and practices is important and requires special efforts. In such communication the flow of information from the adopters to the introducers of innovations is crucial. Intensive interpersonal communication is essential to raise the social consciousness of the partners involved in the process of innovation diffusion. Experiences in Comilla show that sometimes the introducers of innovations fail to cope with the changing needs for information that arise out of practical problems and considerations faced by the adopters in the field. In an effective rural development project the stage comes when the problem of communication is no longer *how* to reach the rural people but rather, how to respond to their increasing communication needs. Obviously, the solution to that problem lies in restructuring and strengthening the components of the communication system beyond the villages.

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